

Wednesday, August 20, 2014  
9:40 AM

## ROUGH STORIES

Bill Kaufmann and ---- drafted the speech for the NATO meeting at Athens with very little or no guidance from McNamara. It's not clear that it was even suggested to them that this would be the time to introduce the allies to the nature of the new war plans (which would officially be instituted at the start of the new fiscal year, July 1, 1962), nor to criticize the role of "independent" strategic forces like those of France and England. But that's what they drafted, even denigrating the latter in terms that could only be described as insulting. And McNamara approved the draft, even enthusiastically, and delivered it to the allies.

It was, after all, an in-house, top secret speech among military allies. [later: apparently Soviet intelligence didn't pick the message up for their leadership: to my surprise, when I learned much later that Khrushchev hadn't heard it until he read the unclassified version I worked on for Ann Arbor, months later.] But it pulled no punches in front of that closed audience. National forces (the words British or French weren't used, but they were the only ones that existed in the alliance besides American) were [QUOTE] unreliable, ineffective, vulnerable. Still worse, they screwed up the strategy, our new strategy.

That was the coercive strategy of my guidance. [QUOTE] It relied on offering the Soviets the "strongest possible incentives" to avoid attacking allied cities, *whether they were striking first or second*, by our withholding initial attacks on Soviet bloc cities and keeping them under threat, so long as our own cities were not attacked, as we attacked "military targets." [QUOTE on our return to "traditional" military tactics.]

The speech text didn't claim any guarantee or even high likelihood that the Soviets would allow in their planning for this avoidance (or postponement) of a city-busting exchange that would vastly increase casualties on both sides, or that they would follow it in actual practice. But it allowed a chance that they would do so—a chance that wouldn't otherwise exist, the only chance in an actual thermonuclear war—and thus a basis for some hope, a prospect that was "not altogether infeasible" that the devastation of the war would be contained within some limits, and that the war could be brought to an end on acceptable terms.

But this chance, however slim, would be wrecked if independent, uncoordinated allied forces (read, French: or conceivably, French-German) were simultaneously, or even prior to American attacks, pursuing an entirely different strategy. As it was understood, they would be. The French (and British) forces, being small, and at that time highly vulnerable to attack (they couldn't be held in reserve) were publicly known to be targeted exclusively on cities, not military targets, and above all on Moscow, for maximum deterrence. [SEE REF, on strategic targeting]. The French

publicly talked about their deterrent strategy of “tearing off a limb,” but that delicate phrase was really a euphemism for tearing off the head of the Soviet system, the biggest city in the USSR and the brain-cage of its command network, decapitation. The British likewise. (And after all, that had been the top priority of our own planning for over a decade). A no-cities American strategy was flatly infeasible if our allies were determined to negate it.

But did the Athens speech have any prospect at all of changing this situation? McNamara said later [QUOTE KQED interview] that there wasn't any chance either of discouraging the French from pursuing their independent force, or of affecting their planning. So why the gratuitous attack on their policy?

(More fundamentally, if he really believed this—as was realistic—then how as the no-cities, coercive strategy feasible at all? It rested entirely on preserving Moscow, and either Washington or some survivable U.S. command authority, from initial attacks. It was hard enough to imagine, but just conceivable, that a president and secretary of defense actually bring about that restraint from U.S. forces, having directed it. But what chance was there of achieving that with forces they didn't even command, and which were shaped entirely on the purpose of destroying Moscow? I have to acknowledge that this challenge hadn't been in my mind at all when I worked on guidance. Just as SAC ignored allied forces (the way they did U.S. theater forces, before 1960)—as trifling, and not under their control—so did I, in my strategizing. And, so far I could see, McNamara, in approving it.)

Apparently, as McNamara indicated later, the attack on independent forces was intended not so much to affect French planning as to discourage the growing interest the French were nourishing in a joint German-French nuclear force, or a “European” nuclear force in which the French would be dominant. Either of those would have diminished U.S. influence on the alliance and the Continent. Likewise, the U.S. lost no opportunity to discourage the possibility of a German-controlled nuclear force.

In any case, the Athens speech didn't cause great tumult in its immediate audience. The only official response was from the French representative, who dismissed its implications for the French force coolly. [QUOTE] The others were, reportedly, “enthralled” with this very first description of American strategic nuclear plans. (They had never been exposed to SIOP-62, or its predecessors). Whether they can have been truly reassured, on reflection, by the calculations presented of the differential results in terms of casualties of the proposed new strategy and the alternative described is a little hard to imagine. [QUOTE CASUALTY ESTIMATES: 115 million U.S. dead in a SIOP-62 type attack, 25 million in the new no-cities approach; comparable for Europe).

The context here was, of course, a U.S. attack in accord with its NATO commitments facing an overwhelming Soviet conventional attack on West Europe: i.e., a US first strike (not labeled as such, or labeled at all: not a preventive attack, but either a



preemptive or an escalatory first strike). This may have been the very first time that the NATO civilian and military representatives present had ever been offered an official American "butcher's bill" estimate of the allied casualties to be suffered if the Americans carried out their demanded and promised strategic nuclear "defense" of Western Europe. That by earlier American planning (which might yet, even probably, eventuate, certainly if the French carried out their plans) there would be a hundred million American deaths and nearly as many European should have given the allied listeners a lot to think about. More bluntly: it should have been shattering, devastating. Was it? We have no records on this. Nor were there any questions asked, so far as the accounts of the meeting go, on how many would be killed in the Soviet bloc, or elsewhere.

But what about the estimate for the results of the centrally-controlled, American-directed escalation, without French or British disruption? Big difference: not 115 million U.S. and 100 million European, but 25 million U.S. and the same European.

### Fifty million dead!

That's what the American secretary of defense was telling his allies, to reassure them that the U.S. was not merely prepared but absolutely ready to carry out our commitments. It was in order to achieve *this* that he was attacking the prospect of uncoordinated "independent deterrent" forces.

Yes, no doubt, better than two hundred million allied dead. And he wasn't claiming that this less-bad outcome was anything but disastrous. That was why he was urging the alliance to spend money to move toward a conventional defense against conventional attack. Yet they had been convinced for a decade (and been told by the Americans) that an adequate conventional defense was infeasible, meaning that money spent on it was down a rat-hole. And this new American strategy (if feasible at all) looked measurably less insane than its alternative, but still insane: still incredible for a rational decision-maker.

Little wonder that the French response was so calm, in the face of this challenge: affirming, in effect, that their "little" deterrent, in defense of their own territory (or their immediate neighbor, Germany) was not less credible than that of the distant superpower.

Nevertheless, McNamara liked the speech well enough that he decided to present a declassified version of it (omitting classified force figures) as his commencement speech at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, in June.

Adam Yarmolinky, McNamara's assistant, asked Bill Kaufmann to draft the revised version, but he refused. He felt strongly the speech was not suitable for public presentation. The original audience of generals and civilian officials of defense departments may not have seen official estimates of hundreds of millions of deaths before, but they couldn't have been wholly surprised by them. What they had seen

were classified results of military exercises in Europe where hypothetical deaths of tens of millions were reported. (When one of these leaked in Germany, it caused an uproar).